

# Outlines of a dialogic participant grammar

## Abstract

The notion of ‘participant’ has many interpretations in linguistics. Two of the most obvious ones are ‘an entity present or represented in the speech event’ (as in ‘discourse participant’ or ‘conversational participant’) or ‘a morpho-syntactically indexed element’ (as in ‘actant’ or ‘referent’). But, particularly over the past decade, studies of aspect, modality and evidentiality have identified many more candidates.

For example, Smith (2003; 2010) introduces the notion of ‘viewpoint aspect’, which crucially involves the viewpoint of some entity involved in the aspectual meaning. Modal meanings have long been described as involving certain types of participants (e.g. Verstraete, 2001; 2005), as have predicates of personal taste and interjections, e.g., under the rubric of ‘protagonist projection’ (Stokke, 2013; Buckwalter, 2014).

In this talk I propose that a comprehensive approach to all these interpretations of ‘participant’ can be achieved by adopting the radical idea defended by Pascual (2014) that language is crucially shaped by interpretations of the conversation frame. I argue that by directly applying this idea to grammar and making explicit how the participant types introduced in the literature relate to the conversation frame, well-established typological patterns of scope relations between TAME categories can be explained and diachronic and synchronic relations between them can be predicted. Specifically, I propose that participant types such as introduced above can be derived from the maximal participant structure in (1), which Spronck (2016) proposes as a representation of multiple-perspective meanings, based on Jakobson (1957).

$$(1) \quad E^n \quad \begin{array}{c} P^{E^ns} \\ | \\ P^n \end{array} \quad / \quad \begin{array}{c} P^{Es} \\ | \\ P^s \end{array}$$

I test and illustrate this proposal on the basis of a sample of languages from Papua New Guinea (n= 20). Particularly, I consider a construction type that diachronically derives from a reported speech construction, but that in several languages has developed modal, aspectual and causative meanings (cf. Reesink, 1993). I conclude by suggesting cross-linguistic implications of the proposed analysis for syntactic approaches to event structure and argument structure.

## References

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